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ABSTRACT

Characteristics and patterns of Ukrainian language usage expressing social distance are analyzed, with examples given from current usage and, to a lesser extent, perspectives drawn from historical usage. It is concluded that Ukrainian has a rich morphological paradigm to express distance, primarily through diminutive morphology, which can transform noun gender, and the related interaction of morphology and pragmatics. In Ukrainian, diminutives are functionally heavily loaded, expressing empathy and sympathy, increasing familiarity, signalling cooperativeness, and thus reducing psychological distance between interlocutors. Physical distance is seen as less important in communication. (MSE)

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# Linguistic Means of Expressing Distance between Interlocutors in Ukrainian

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The distance between interlocutors can be social, psychological and physical (Dressler, Merlini Barbaresi 1994: 10). The interlocutors are the main participants in the speech situation, though not all of them are of the same status and importance. The main interlocutors are the speaker and the hearer. As for passive participants, they are listeners, who are taken account of by the speaker, and bystanders, who,as a rule, are not taken account of by the speaker. Accordingly, bystanders do not participate in the conversation and they do not always express their concern in the topic discussed. But as soon as the communication attracts their attention they may become passive or active participants of the discourse, in accordance with the principle of cooperativeness (Kiefer 1979: 59-60; Leech 1983: 16).

In official communication it is difficult to recognize the real distance between the interlocutors, as the norms of this type of communication usually do not express it. Social and psychological distance are mutually dependent. Although social distance has generally accepted forms and markers for its expression in official ceremonies, the expression of psychological distance is not encompassed by the norms of Ukrainian officialese.

There are several factors which influence the social distance between the partners of communication, making it wider or narrower. The form of address used by the speaker is one of them. According to the iconicity of the Ukrainian officialese personal pronoun "Ви" (*Vy*, you) is generally accepted as a term of address. In fact, however, it defocuses the true relations among the participants in the conversation.[1] As a social norm (and not only of the Ukrainian language), it is a kind of pragmatic strategy to obscure the objective



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relationship of the speaker and the hearer. This term often makes it difficult for passive participants and bystanders to understand the position of a given interlocutor, as the form "Ви" avoids direct definite reference. If it avoids direct reference, it is called exclusive; if it implies it, it is inclusive. With exclusive direct reference the cooperativeness of the participants is usually very weak, or even absent. And it is power that it is associated with these types of reference and the usage of pronoun system T/V (Tannen 1996: 22). For example, if a manager speaks of a certain document of his firm that cannot be accepted with endorsement because of strict rules towards his employees, their cooperativeness with the manager is weak. Exclusive reference on the part of the manager formally reduces his responsibilities. With inclusive reference, the document declares new privileges for the staff (as a personal concern of the manager). In this situation the manager is cooperative with his employees. It is in the second type of situation, rather than the first, that there are favourable conditions even for bystanders to become passive or even active participants in communication.

The T/V system regulates the social distance but insofar as it permits not only inclusive but also exclusive direct reference, which makes social relations rather distant, it is not adequate for the concretization of the relations between the participants in living communication. For maximally effective communication, the interlocutors must resort to a definite address term. Insofar as Ukraine was one of the republics of the ex-USSR, there still exist in Ukraine socially accepted address terms dating from the time of the disintegrated country. One of these is "товариш/і" (*tovaryš/i*, comrade(s)). It has a binary opposition expressing number (s/pl) and gender (m/f), but in actual speech the word "товариш/ка" (*tovaryš/ka*, m/f) is now scarcely ever used in Ukrainian. It sounds detached and lacks strong honorific features. Increasing the social distance between the speaker and hearer, it is assumed as a social form even now (having been imposed by the communist regime), but it can hardly be assumed as a socially polite form. As a result, the

whole situation of communication with this address term is quite undefined. For example, the speaker, addressing a female partner as "товаришка", can often hurt the feelings of a more sophisticated interlocutor, as it is rather detached and unexpressive. So male discourse-participants resort to another term of address which was common in the USSR, "жінка" (*žynka*, woman) or "дівчина" (*divčyna*, girl). But these forms cannot be considered very felicitous either: they subjectively differentiate the age and marital status of the partner addressed. An error with respect to marital status or age is frequent but absolutely undesirable towards a female partner in communication. Sometimes it is even crucial. Increasing considerably the social distance between the interlocutors, it may lead to a total break in communication.

As for the plural form "товариші" (comrades), it was (and still is) used by a speaker addressing an audience, but this term does not reveal the actual relations between the speaker and hearer. The physical distance in such communication is considerably remote, while the psychological distance is absolutely indefinite.

The speaker may resort to the term "громадянин/громадянка" (*hromadjanyn/hromadjanka*, citizen, m/f), which was very common in oral communication in the USSR. Its basic meaning of "inhabitant with full rights in the country" lies in the background of its functional meaning as a term of address. It is still used now, but only in the language of official documents. It can no longer be a term of address, imposed by the communist regime, because this form of address does not reduce the distance between the partners in oral communication.

As we have seen, all the above-mentioned forms of address are still used. But insofar as they do not satisfy the necessary requirements of effective communication, there is a rapid search underway for a term which, discriminating number and gender, might transform the whole situation of speech from detached and indefinite to sympathetic and polite. This form has been found. It is, in fact, a reintroduced term of address "пані та

панове" (*pani ta panove*), which was used before the Revolution of 1917. The meaning of this term can be more or less exactly rendered by the English "ladies and gentlemen". Having been reintroduced, the address term "пані та панове" is being accepted only with difficulty, especially by older people. in the Soviet period the words "пан, пані, панове" had another meaning (aside from the denotation as a social form of address): "those who rule and exploit". This meaning, imposed by the social system of the Soviet period, even now is so strong that, while easily and willingly accepted by the young, it is used only with difficulty by the older generation with strong conservative convictions. But the universal general use of "пані та панове" as the most felicitous term of address is inevitable, as it has the full range of functions: it discriminates number and gender, and it turns the whole situation of speech from detached and indefinite to sympathetic and polite. In this way the atmosphere of communication becomes concrete and socially definite. The social distance between interlocutor is reduced considerably.

The use of a particular term of address depends to a great extent on the speech situation in which it may be used, and which regulates the social distance in the communication. At official ceremonies, bystanders are usually excluded in accordance with the norms of such ceremonies. But by the norms of certain Ukrainian family ceremonies, even bystanders may become participants. Such a shift in the social distance among the participants is exhibited in the form of address used by the speaker. For instance, the ceremony of the funeral in Ukraine has no established form of address, insofar as visiting this ceremony is not strictly forbidden. Thus bystanders may become passive participants. This situational factor accounts for the form of address "всі, хто тут з нами в цю скорбну годину" (*vsi, xto tut z namy v c'ju skorbnu hodynu*, all those who are here with us in the hour of sorrow). Ceremonies of this type are characterized by the principle of cooperativeness, which reduces the actual distance among all the participants, regardless of the rather indefinite form of address.

The language spoken in the society is another strong factor that makes an impact on the social distance between interlocutors.Though the Ukrainian language is an official state language, it is not always spoken (even at official ceremonies) by the majority of the Russian-speaking population. The common type of today's discourse is bilingual (Ukrainian/Russian). Sometimes this is not so much a problem of cooperativeness as a socio-cultural problem: the interlocutors do not possess proper spoken skills of the Ukrainian language because there was no necessity for it: Russian was the state language of the USSR and the lack of proper mastery of Ukrainian compels some people to speak Russian.

Bilingual communication does not exert a great influence on social distance if the principle of cooperativeness is observed. But this principle is often replaced by an antagonistic one, and then bilingual communication increases social distance.

We can speak of two social factors in Ukraine which regulate, and often eliminate, bilingual communication (though they do not always reduce social and psychological distance respectively): a) the subordinate state of the speaker, his dependence on the hearer, and his personal interest in him; b) the independent status of the speaker, and a cultural and educational level that is higher than that of the hearer. The first factor is illustrated by the following examples: a shop assistant whose native language is Russian will speak Ukrainian if a customer addresses him in Ukrainian; an employee will speak Ukrainian to his manager whose native language is Ukrainian; a person inquiring information will speak the language of the person addressed even if the first addressing phrase was pronounced in his native language which is different from the addressee's. These examples eliminate bilingual communication without reducing the social and psychological distance between the participants. The second factor illustrates the possibility of reducing the social (but not the psychological) distance in monolingual communication. What is important here is the age of the interlocutors, their sympathy/empathy, and their educational level. Taking into

account these conditions, one of the participants elevates the other, who is older than he is and does not have a good command of the state language. Minimizing his importance, the first speaker intentionally plays himself down. It is an illustration of his strong positive traits, through which the social distance between him and his partner is reduced. If the above mentioned factors are not taken into account, there is a simultaneous bilingual communication in which the interlocutors show their detachment and lack of sympathy.

Social and psychological distance are mutually dependent, but psychological distance is more influenced by empathy—this is typical of Ukrainian, which has rich morphological means of expressing empathy. The active paradigm of the Ukrainian language is an effective means of shortening the psychological distance between the interlocutors. When the distance is minimal, the hearer may even interrupt the speaker by putting in a relevant remark—this normally is not treated as impolite. This phenomenon exists in other languages too, though it is not obligatorily expressed morphologically. As unmotivated friendliness (Dressler, Merlini Barbaresi 1994:11), it is well expressed in a child-oriented language. In Ukrainian, psychological closeness is rendered with the help of a wide range of diminutive and gender-transformation processes.

Before speaking of the pragmatic re-evaluation of the morphological paradigm of Ukrainian, we must give our concept of empathy in comparison with sympathy, insofar as these notions can background or foreground the basic morphological meaning of the key element and make a considerable impact on the psychological distance of the partners. Our understanding of empathy coincides with that of Kuno (1976:432)—"the speaker takes the addressee's or the referent's side and identifies with him"—but Kuno does not use empathy with its correlation to diminutives. As for Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994:208), they do take the role of diminutives into account and define empathy as "an ability to imagine oneself in somebody else's place and understand the other's feelings, desires, ideas, and actions in the sense of an imaginative projection of one's own

consciousness into another being." In contrast to sympathy, which is a dyadic relation between the speaker and the hearer, empathy represents a triadic relation (of the self adopting another's feelings and ideas). Empathy is typically displaced together with sympathy. If, for example, a child is subjected to a serious medical treatment, his mother sympathizes and empathizes with it and is willing to be in its place. Sympathy and empathy functioning together signal absolute psychological closeness between the partners.

But sympathy may also be expressed without empathy. If, for example, a person has to quit his job because of some subjective reasons not approved by his employer, the colleagues of the employee will sympathize but not empathize with him. As for the manager, his colleagues on the contrary, will empathize with him rather than with the employee. In the Ukrainian language, functional transformations of morphological means are so strong that they are able to neutralize the grammatical base of the morphological element and, as a result, the morphological meaning is ruled by the pragmatic one. Such functional transformation is easy with the Ukrainian category of gender. The Ukrainian language has a rich paradigm of flexions to discriminate feminine, masculine, and neuter gender, which is covered by four declensions. But even within them, the generic forms are very flexible: they can easily be transformed due to the rich diminutive morphology:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| дівчина (*divčyna*, f) | — | дівча (n) (*divča*, a girl) |
| човен (*čoven*, m) | — | човенце (n) (*čovence*, a boat) |

A newly attained grammatical meaning of the neuter gender doesn't reflect the sex of the living being denoted by these nouns. It is the sphere of pragmatics in which situation the speaker will use one gender form rather than another. As for the newly formed nouns, they are mainly used in the child/pet/lovers-oriented speech situation. Such nominations express the speaker's sympathy and empathy making the psychological

distance minimal. The former grammatical meaning of gender is neutralized by the pragmatic force, which signals weakness, modesty, tenderness, and attractiveness of the nominal referent. Compare Example 1:

(1)

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Прямодушне | дівча, | воно | й | не | підозрювало, | як | бракувало |
| | тоді | ще | віри | в себе | | | |
| Prjamodušne | divča, | vono | j | ne | pidozrjuvalo, | jak | brakuvalo |
| | todi | šče | viry | v sebe | | | |
| frank | girl, | she | even | not | suspected | how | lacked |
| | then | .INTENS. | | belief | | in self | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| цьому | похмурому | документалістові |
| c'omu | poxmuromu | dokumentalistovi |
| this.DAT | gloomy.DAT | essayist.DAT |

"This frank girl didn't even suspect that the gloomy essayist was so uncertain about himself." (O. Hončar)

The example shows that the so-called pragmatic valency of the noun "дівча" increases due to the transformation of its gender. The meaning of tenderness and compassion is foregrounded not only in the speaker's but also in the author's perspective.[2] It is a kind of an assertive speech act (the most interesting for sentences with generically transformed elements), namely the act of assessment because of the evaluative character of the noun intensified by the attributive element "прямодушне" (frank, open-hearted). Generic transformation is expressed in a noun, but the pragmatic meaning of it refers to the whole situation and spreads over the whole speech act. Such interdependence of

morphology and pragmatics is scarcely investigated in a systemic way (Dressler, Merlini Barbaresi 1994:50). The speaker's sympathy aroused by the person or object to which he refers with tenderness is a kind of a regulative property which rules the hearer's comprehension of the constitutive feature of the object and the whole situation.

The speaker's sympathy is influenced not only by the gender transformation, but also by the usage of diminutives. Diminutives and generically transformed forms can serve the same aim simultaneously:

(2)

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Звірятко | повело | вухами, | ніби | почуло | думку | чоловіка, | черкнуло |
| Zvirjatko | povelo | vuxamy, | niby | počulo | dumku | čolovika, | čerknulo |
| animal | moved | ears.INST | as if | heard | thought | man.GEN | touched |

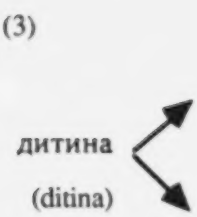
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| обмерзлою | лапкою | об | лапку |
| obmerzloju | lapkoju | ob | lapku |
| frozen.INST | paw.INST | to | paw |

"The animal moved its ears as if it had heard the man's thought, touching its frozen paws to one another." (M. Stel'max)

This example illustrates gender transformation (m —> n) and diminutive usage of the suffixes "-ятк-" (*-jatk-*, in the noun "animal") and "-к-" (*-k-*, in the noun "paw").

A rich paradigm of the Ukrainian diminutives makes it difficult to predict their actual usage even for the native speakers. The difference between diminutive suffixes is sometimes almost inconceivable even in the appropriate context. For example, the diminutive paradigm of the noun "baby" includes seven forms with the transformed gender (l) and three forms with the stable gender marker (2):

(3)




(1)дитя (dytja) —дитятко (dytjatko) —дитяточко (dytjatočko) —дитятонько (dytjaton'ko) —дитинча (dytynča) —дитинчатко (dytynčato)—дитинчаточко (dytynčatočko)

(2) дитинка (dytynka)—дитиночка (dytynočka)—дитинонька (dytynon'ka)

Ten variants of the same base "дитина" can be scarcely explained and translated into other languages (even within the languages of the Slavic group) because of the lack of equivalents. The preferable usage of one form over another is often the question of their productivity; the speaker is free in his choice, he is a kind of interpreter of this paradigm.

The Ukrainian language shows interdependence of the diminutive structures of the noun and its modifiers. The same meaning can be rendered by the diminutive noun and neutral form of the adjective—"маледитяточко" (*male dytjatočko*, a little baby)—or by the neutral form of the noun and diminutive adjective—"малесенькедитя" (*malesen'ke dytja*, a little baby)

(4)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| adjective + noun | –> | adjective + | noun |
| (dim.) | | | (dim.) |

The adjectival pattern of the degrees of comparison may serve as a model for the diminutive paradigm grading the quality and functionally revaluing it. The grammatical meaning then becomes functionally limited:

(5)

| | positive degree | comparative degree | superlative degree |
|---|---|---|---|
| grammatical meaning | скупий skupij (greedy) | скупіший skupišij | найскупіший najskupišyj |
| pragmatic meaning | скупенький skupen'kyj (supposed to be generous) | скупішенький skupišen'kyj | найскупішенький najskupišen'kyj |

The diminutive transformation of the base (скупий —> скупенький) is a kind of pragmatic strategy when morphosemantic feature becomes the source of the morphopragmatic use. The limitation of the quantitative aspect with downgrading the person's qualities is shown within all three forms of degrees of comparison. This quality can be valued either positively or negatively. But positive valuation is usually more prominent:

(6)

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Хоч | нічого | особливого | в | Марисиній | мові | не було, - |
| хоč | ničoho | osoblyvoho | v | Marysynij | movi | ne bulo |
| though | nothing | special | in | Marysia's | speech | was not |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| були | то | звичайнісінькі, | майже | сентиментальні | слова | втіхи (...) |
| buly | to | zvyčajnisin'ki | majže | sentymental'ni | slova | vtixy |
| were | that | very common | almost | sentimental | words | consolation (GEN) |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| і | вчула | мати | в | них | щире | вболівання | за | свого сина |
| i | včula | mati | v | nyx | ščyre | vbolivannja | za | svoho syna |
| and | felt | mother | in | them | true | apprehension | about | own son |

(There was nothing special in Marysia's speech, very common, almost sentimental words of consolation (…) but the mother felt in them a true apprehension about her son (O Hončar)

In this example, the morphopragmatic strategy of the author changes the morphosemantic meaning. The diminutive suffix "-ісіньк-" (*-isin'k-*) functions as the marker of an evaluative dimension, signaling the reduction of the psychological distance between the interlocutors (Marysia and the mother).

Diminutives can influence the distance between the partners of communication, but they can hardly transform one illocutionary force into another (Dressler, Merlini Barbaresi 1994:314), the speech act of assessment is possible without diminutives, but the distance between the partners will be then not so close.

Diminutives within the morphological category of degrees express sympathetic attitude of the speaker. This attitude is strengthened by the intensifying prefixes "*що-*", "*як-*" which are added to the diminutive adjectives in their superlative degree (where they have already had a prefix "*най-*").

(7) гарний harnyj 'nice' (neutral base)

↓

| гарнесенький — | гарнішенький — що-найгарнішенький |
|---|---|
| harnesen'kyj (diminutive) | harnišen'kyj | ščo-najharnišen'kyj |

The prefixes "*що-*" gives the utterance a great affective intensity.

As we have seen, diminutives in Ukrainian are functionally overloaded. They express empathy/sympathy, increase familiarity, signal the principle of cooperativeness,

and in this way reduce the psychological distance between interlocutors. Such a multiple strategy of diminutives is, as a rule, simultaneous.

As for the physical distance, it implies the static aspects of the speech situation (time, space, general setting of the situation) (Dressler, Marlini Barbaresi; 1994:18-20) rather than the dynamic ones. In canonical situations, the physical distance between participants of communication is minimal, they are in the same time and space. So, coding time (the moment of utterance) and receiving time (the moment of reception of this utterance) can be assumed to be identical (Levinson 1994:62)

Physical distance is less important for communication than social and phychological. For the effective communication, the interlocutors must exist in the same time and space, though they may have different social and cultural norms. Even passive participants or bystanders observing the situation from aside may change their status depending on social or psychological distance rather than a physical one.

## Conclusions

The distance between interlocutors can be social, psychological, and physical. The third person metaphorically denotes the social distance. Distance is a kind of strategy which disguises or reveals the objective, true relations between the participants in the speech situation. Social distance depends on the type of the situation, the form of address, and the status of the speaker and hearer, passive participants, and bystanders. It changes when the status of the participants changes. Psychological and social distance are mutually dependent, but psychological distance is more influenced by empathy/sympathy. Ukrainian has a rich morphological paradigm to express it. An active use of morphological means shows the type of relations between the interlocutors. Functional overloading of diminutives and gender transformation of nouns is a kind of pragmatic strategy that can hardly be rendered by comparable means in other languages. This strategy aims at the reduction of the psychological distance between the discourse partners. Physical distance

implies the static aspect of the speech situation. It is less important in communication; the interlocutors usually exist in the same rather than in different time and space spheres, though they may have different social and cultural norms of existence.

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[1]Levinson (1994:90) considers the "tu/vous" type of distinction displays a referent honorific sytem where the referent happens to be the addressee. But the particular cultural explanation for "tu/vous" (T/V) system will not always be exact because of its widespread distribution, the extent of which perhaps has not been appreciated (Brown, Levinson 1994: 198).

[2]All examples are taken from the book *Ukrainska mova* of G. O. Kozachuk.

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